

NEWSLETTER
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A CACHE OF FLINT BLADES

On Sunday afternoon, January 12, 1958, Allie Chatman and I entered the edge of a field on the side of a secondary road a short distance from Gibsonville, North Carolina.

We had gone about thirty feet from the road and were entering a section of freshly ploughed land, which was very wet due to recent rains, when I saw what appeared to be a small flint chip a couple feet away. I remarked to Allie, who was right by my side, "Here is a nice chip". As I reached down with my stick to turn it over the ground rose under the pressure of the flint being pried up. I stooped over and to my surprise pulled out a $6\frac{1}{2}$ inch blade. Then I noticed another rock that had been moved in pulling out this blade. Removing this rock, I found the second blade. Then as I removed another rock about six inches away I found the third blade. By this time Allie was helping me pry the rocks loose and he found two more blades. Then I started probing in the mud and uncovered another blade while Allie looked around and found the seventh blade in the mud about three feet from the main cache. This all happened in about two minutes.

Not seeing anything else, we took stock of our find and found we had seven slender well-shaped blades and knives averaging about six inches each. Although we were excited about our discovery, we decided it was best not to disturb the muddy site at this time but to find out who the owner was and get permission to examine it when the soil dried out. Being loamy and sandy, it should work nicely when dry.

We then surveyed the field for some distance around

*Editor's Note: This cache appears to be composed of Guilford type blades which were made approximately 6,000 years ago.

but found nothing--not even the usual chips and small points--until we reached a wet soggy spot near the center of the field. Allie made the first find which was a wide blade about $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. Then I picked up two wide blades and Allie found another. These were about 6 inches long and 3 inches wide and they were in a radius of approximately twenty feet, all on the surface. Only a few chips and broken blades were found on the entire site of about five acres.

The four wide blades were a greyish light flint, although small breaks on them show that the inside of the flint is almost black. In contrast to the first cache of seven blades which were cream colored and so porous that ink blotted on them when we attempted to number them, the greyish light flint blades were of a harder flint.

We are of the opinion that in turning around at the end of the field the plough cut into the cache and brought them to the surface. The fact that only one of them was broken, and that was an old break, makes it seem almost impossible that they have been on the surface, as this field has been cultivated for many years. Also, the absence of chips and other artifacts does not indicate a work site, although two chipping sites are located about 500 feet away on higher ground. At this writing we are waiting for the weather to clear up and the field to dry out so we can explore it more thoroughly.

Accompanied by David Chatman, we again visited the site on January 24. First we examined the surface to see if any new artifacts had been exposed by the several hard rains of the past two weeks, but found nothing. Then we started to remove the plowed soil with a shovel. The second shovel of earth exposed two blades, one of which had been broken by the shovel. The soil was full of loose rock which proved to be an obstacle in excavating with a hand trowel, so we had to resort to the shovel. We turned back the soil to a depth of 6-8 inches over an area about 4' x 8'. But since the soil was too wet to screen and we were damaging some of the artifacts with the shovel, we decided to postpone operation until the soil was in better condition. After washing the artifacts and restoring the broken ones, we found we had nineteen blades and four large portions of others, or, twenty-three blades. This plus the seven blades found on January 12 gave us a total of thirty blades from the cache.

On March 5 Allie Chatman, David Chatman and I visited the site of the Gibsonville cache once more. Finding the soil in fine condition, we started to excavate the site again. We decided to start at a corner of the old excavation and go down deep enough with a test trench to uncover anything we

might have missed before. At about twelve inches we decided to turn back all the earth from our previous excavation which we did down to 10-12 inches over an area 20' x 20'. In this operation we found four blades; one was nearly eight inches long--the longest one found at this site. Since no other material or flakes were discovered, we think that the cache had been disturbed and perhaps some of it taken away. However, no chips or broken pieces were found to indicate breaking by cultivation. We have now removed all the blades, a total of thirty-four, from a very unusual find indeed.

Loy Carter
Haw River, North Carolina

NOTICE OF A FALL MEETING

of the

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NORTH CAROLINA

at

on

Chapel Hill

December 5-6

Further information concerning the program and other details of the meeting will be sent to members at a later date.

The American Indian in North Carolina. By Douglas L. Rights. Illustrated. 298 pp. Winston-Salem; ~~Duke University Press~~. \$6.00. 2nd Ed. J.F. Blair, Pub.

For a period of not less than 350 years after his initial contact with the white men of DeSoto's 1540 expedition, the American Indian was engaged in a continual struggle with the European intruders to retain not only his homelands but also his very way of life. It is with this struggle that the author, a Moravian minister, but by avocation an Indian hunter, is primarily concerned in his second edition of "The American Indian in North Carolina."

Mr. Rights' discussion of the tribes of North Carolina is presented "according to chronology of discovery

and early contacts." This of necessity involves the age old question concerning the possibility of North Carolina Indians coming in contact with the Spanish in DeSoto's exploration party. Although much has been written on this controversial subject, the author limits his discussion to a few brief arguments pro and con as to whether DeSoto's route took him across the mountains of western North Carolina. In introducing the aborigines to the English the intriguing story of the Lost Colony is included and provides an excellent opportunity for interesting speculation on the part of the reader.

Succeeding chapters deal with the decline of the coastal and piedmont tribes--a decline not wholly attributable to the arrival of the white man but certainly hastened by his unscrupulous relations with the Indian. Undoubtly the most interesting feature about these chapters and those throughout the remainder of the book, is the inclusion of excerpts from the writings of explorers and traders who traveled in North Carolina. Concerning the Eno Indians living not far from the present Hillsboro, the records of a German doctor, John Lederer, describe them as being "mean of stature and courage, covetous and thievish, industrious to earn a penny". He tells of the location and the method of constructing houses and of the democratic government in which the word of the old men of the tribe was absolute law.

In addition to Lederer, the writings of John Lawson provide a vivid and detailed description of the rhythmic charm of a thanksgiving ceremony commemorating a bountiful harvest of corn. Lawson was responsible for contributing a considerable amount of information to our understanding of the Indians of North Carolina. Yet it was on a scouting expedition in 1611 that he was captured and brutally executed by the Tuscarora. Because of the illuminating descriptions of the Tuscarora on the war path, the author has included excerpts from a narrative of Baron Christopher de Graffenried who was taken prisoner along with Lawson but later released.

The last tribe to come in contact with the white man was the Cherokee and a considerable portion of the book concerns this, the largest Indian tribe in North Carolina. It is a story of constant strife in its dealings with the United States Government culminating in the tragic and cruel removal of this once powerful nation to the barren lands in Oklahoma territory. In order for the reader to gain an insight into various aspects of Cherokee life, some of the very entertaining works of James Mooney are recorded. The Cult of the Shamans, Origin of Disease and Medicine, Cherokee Theology, and Incantations together with Myths of the Cherokee provide some of the most fascinating chapters of the entire book.

Finally, the author has included a chapter on Archaeology which leaves much to be desired particularly since a definite Archaeological program is being carried on in the state of North Carolina.

It must be pointed out that although a few maps are included, the location of most Indian towns is not shown on these maps. How much more interesting the narrative would have been if the reader could have had immediate access to a map of the Indian villages, instead of the fold-out map of present-day counties and towns, and thus been able to trace the exact routes of the explorers and to locate the numerous Indian occupation sites.

"The American Indian in North Carolina" is not nor was it ever intended to be a technical study. But for the layman who is interested in the various Indian tribes that inhabited the vast regions of North Carolina from the coastal plain to the great Smokey Mountains; for the layman who finds a certain charm and captivation in Indian folklore and mythology, in habits and in customs; for these, "The American Indian in North Carolina" will provide a few hours of informative and fascinating reading involving 350 years of struggle between two great but conflicting civilizations.

Carolyn Corbin
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

ASA GRAY PHELPS

The Society regrets to announce the death of Asa Gray Phelps of Warwick, Virginia.

Mr. Phelps had been a member of the Society since 1941 and was an ardent collector of artifacts in eastern North Carolina and Virginia, being also a member of the Virginia Archaeological Society. His collection of pottery types and arrowheads has been given to the Warwick City Schools.

A supervisor with the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, he was born in Bertie County, North Carolina and attended North Carolina State College.

Until the time of his death in April 1956, Mr. Phelps was active in church affairs, being treasurer of Hilton Baptist Church for the past 25 years. He is survived by his widow and two young sons; Asa Gray, Jr., and William Phelps.